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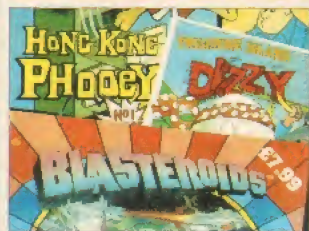
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GREAT GAMES**



Is this *really* the
way forward?
Check out page 5

BARGAINS!



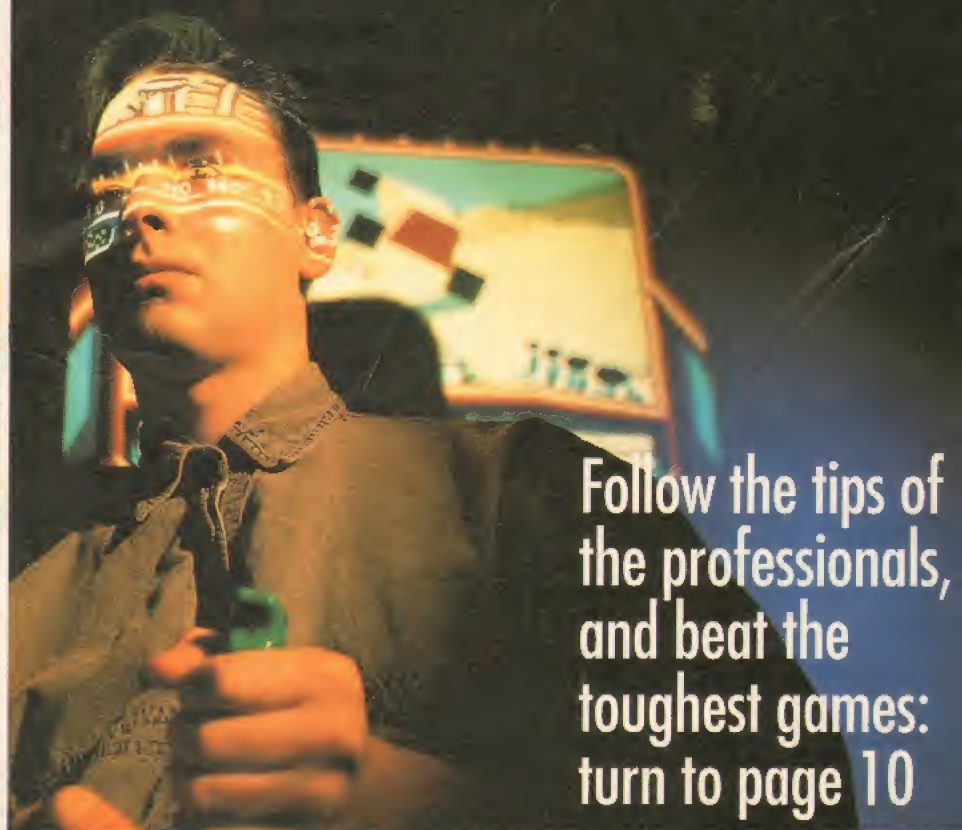
Revealed: the best
of budget – page 15

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turn to page 10

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& UTTER TRASH**

Read our guide to the
controversial and the
terrible – page 18

**HOW THIS MAN CAN
BOIL YOUR BRAIN...**



Find out the *wicked* secrets of
addictive games – page 12

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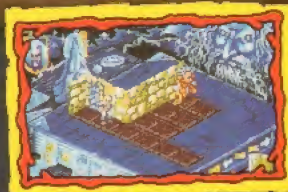
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OPENING SEQUENCE

Amiga owners are in no doubt that their machine is the best. Not only is it a great productivity computer, it's also an exceptional games console.

Commentators are forever turning toward dedicated games consoles as the future of software entertainment. But judging by the quality of the latest batch of Amiga games, we're not convinced by this argument at all. Check out Stuart Campbell's controversial predictions on the future of Amiga gaming before making your decision.

Also, take a look at our pick of the best of budget games on page 15. We've highlighted twelve titles out of the hundreds on offer. But you might well have better ideas about what makes a great game at a good price. Feel free to drop us a line at the usual address.

And, of course, have some fun...

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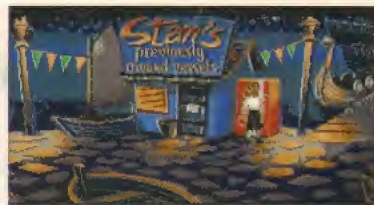
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Page screenshots: The Secret of Monkey Island, Lemmings and Interceptor.

WHAT'S ON!

INTO THE FUTURE

These are great days for Amiga games, but what of tomorrow? Express steps into the Amiga's curious future - page 5

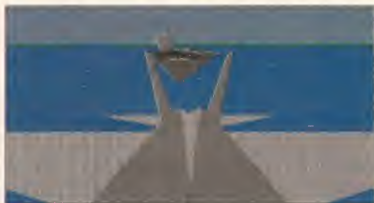


DON'T BE A LOSER

Take control of games by taking the tips of the professionals. Four of the country's best gamers offer advice - page 10

OFF THE HOOK

What makes a game like Lemmings so darned difficult to put down? We asked the addiction experts - page 12



CHEAP AND CHEERFUL

Follow our guide to the best of budget and PD games. You can save yourself plenty of money - page 15

FROM THE DUSTBIN

Oh dear! Sometimes games aren't quite as good as they should be. Check out the lowest of the low - page 18



PLUS: Win a Philips colour monitor or one of six excellent arcade action packs in our fantastic £2,000 competition - page 22

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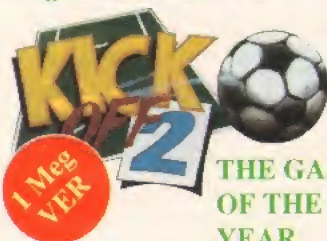
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THE HALCYON DAYS OF AMIGA GAMES

There has never been a better time for playing computer games, and there has never been a better computer for the job than the Amiga. But things will not always be so. Stuart Campbell enjoys the Amiga's halcyon days, and takes a pragmatic peer into the future...

A miga games, eh? Don't you just love 'em? The 1991 state of the art in home based computer entertainment software. The peak of technical excellence coupled with unrivalled scope and diversity, there's truly something for everyone. Yep, there's no doubt about it, if you're a serious and dedicated games player, the Amiga is the only machine for you.

Of course, it hasn't always been thus. As recently as a year ago, 8-bit machines like the Speccy and the C64 still outsold anything else in software terms, and even now they hold a sizeable chunk of the market.



• *Final Whistle: Off the back of another game.*

Today the Amiga is the machine for games players, but a threat has made an appearance. The consoles renaissance is really getting into gear, with the Megadrive, Neo Geo and Super Famicom all either out or imminent, and the Game Boy, Game Gear, Lynx and handheld PC Engine all eating into the game buyer's budget at the same time. So are these the salad days for our old creamy-coloured chum, or is there a big tunnel at the end of all this light? How is the Amiga going to cope with this flood of competition in the years to come?



• *Fantasy World Dizzy: Original, fun, successful and cheap.*

What, essentially, has the Amiga got that no-one else has? It's time to face facts. For all the Amiga's advantages, it can't compete with the new breed of consoles. (Take a look at *Sonic The Hedgehog* on the Megadrive, then imagine it on an Amiga if you don't believe me.) It was never built to do so.

All these new machines are dedicated to one thing and one thing only, the playing of games. They handle



• *Shadow of the Beast II: Gorgeous graphics but not much of a game. A vision of the future?*

graphics better, they move faster, they sound better, they load instantaneously, they pack huge amounts of memory into every game, and when was the last time you played a console game with a serious bug in it, or one that crashed when you did something it couldn't cope with, or one with tacky presentation and clumsy copy protection systems? Never, that's when.

'The 8-bit market has stagnated to a degree that must terrify 16-bit producers. The same fate could await them.'

The old bugbear about consoles only having two kinds of game, the shoot-'em-up and the Marlo-style platform game, is dead now too, with *Populous* and *Lemmings* showing up on the Megadrive, and fantasy RPG on consoles turning into a booming industry. So forget arcade games, forget strategy games, forget RPG. The Amiga is going to be outmanoeuvred by machines costing half as much as it does, and as 16-bit software becomes more and more expensive, the traditional price differential is going to become more and more eroded too. So what's left for the Amiga?

UK AMIGA GAMES CHART DEC 1988

- 1) Operation Wolf
- 2) Double Dragon
- 3) ThunderBlade
- 4) Batman
- 5) Football Manager 2
- 6) Pacmania
- 7) Elite
- 8) Return Of The Jedi
- 9) Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge
- 10) OutRun

UK AMIGA GAMES CHART MAY 1991

- 1) Lemmings
- 2) Speedball 2
- 3) SWIV
- 4) Fantasy World Dizzy
- 5) R-Type
- 6) Final Whistle
- 7) Little Puff In Dragon Land
- 8) F-19 Stealth Fighter
- 9) A-10 Tank Killer
- 10) Super Hang-On

The answer seems to be, 'specialisation'. The Amiga's always been something of a jack-of-all-trades, but it seems like the time has come for it to find a niche. Let's step back in time for a moment, to the time when the Amiga first became a major force in software sales. The December 1988 top ten (boxed) shows quite a narrow band of styles. Lots of arcade conversions and licenses and very little else. Back to the present day, though, and the picture is a little different (above).

Barely a license in sight, and half the chart is made up of budget software, either original or cut-price re-release. Already a couple of minority interest simulations have crossed over into the realms of mass appeal, and there are more on the way (*Mig 29*, for example, seems set for a long residency in the charts).



• *Flight Path 737: Utter nonsense, for only £2.99*

A larger and larger proportion of the games in my own mag, *Amiga Power*, seem these days to be made up of 'serious' types, be they flight sims, wargames, or sprawling strategic adventure things. The one thing they all have in common is that they're the kind of games you don't really ever see on consoles. The picture seems to be clear. More and more, Amiga software appears to be heading in a very specialised direction, targeted at the older gamer, and possibly at the kind of person who doesn't consider themselves a 'games player' at all.

The other feature of today's chart, and one which looks like becoming a lot more pronounced in the future, is the polarisation of prices. Frequently, top-of-the-range Amiga software is priced at £30 and over, but it's almost matched sale-for-sale by budget games costing £8 and less. Indeed, very recently a substantial range of Amiga games has been launched at the incredible price of £2.99, directly comparable with 8-bit budget games.

Many of the games in the range are one-time full-price titles on a second wind. **Continued on page 6 ►**

OUT OF POCKET?

The Amiga market will divide into two very distinct sections, with buyers satisfying their thirst for new games with cheapo stuff, and only occasionally splashing out on prestige releases. Much the same situation exists at the moment with the 8-bit machines.

The vast majority of their charts consist of budget software, with only the really exceptional full-pricers putting in an appearance. What's more, those full-pricers are practically always conversions of 16-bit games and arcade licenses. When was the last time you saw a great original 8-bit game? Come to that, when was the last time you saw an original 8-bit game full stop?



• *Switchblade II*; Possibly the first Amiga game to truly look and feel as if it belongs in an arcade.

Unfortunately, the 8-bit market has stagnated to a degree that must terrify 16-bit producers, as exactly the same fate could await them, except over a much shorter period. The C64 and Speccy have both been on the go for some nine years now, but the parallels between their software market and the three-year-old (in terms of worthwhile sales) Amiga's are already apparent.

If the Amiga doesn't find itself a little corner soon, it could be squeezed out between the consoles (the cutting edge of technology) and the cheaper machines (entry-level prices, and with established user base).

WHAT ABOUT CDTV?

"But what about CDTV?", you cry. "Surely that's going to lift the Amiga into a whole new dimension, bringing it to a mass (family) market while at the same time improving the prospects for existing users beyond belief." Don't make me laugh. However much Commodore protests to the contrary, CDTV is going to be seen by consumers as a computer product, and at £200 is going to appeal only to a very small minority of rich technophiles.

It's well beyond the reach of the masses, and as such won't inspire any really significant software market. If the price differential between tape-based and disk-based games (or for that matter, the price differential between vinyl and CD products in the music industry) is anything to go by, CDTV will simply provide the software business with an excuse to charge even higher prices for the same old product, driving the paying punter still deeper into the grateful arms of Nintendo and Sega. (Remember, the Megadrive currently retails at £149 or less, and it's going to go down before up.)

CDTV is also likely to kill off the embryonic Amiga cartridge market, knocking out the last real chance of



• CDTV: new beginnings, but not a revolution.

COMING SOON TO SAVE THE WORLD

Look out for these great games which are bound to capture the headlines over the coming months.

R-TYPE II (Activision)

This could be the coin-op conversion that makes the critics eat their words. Due out for ages, it should finally hit the streets this summer and it's looking flawless, complete with the parallax-scrolling backgrounds that were missing from the first game. Arcade perfection at last? Let's wait and see.

THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND II (Lucasfilm/US Gold)

Many people are touting *The Secret Of Monkey Island* as the best adventure game on any machine anywhere ever, and the sequel promises to be even better (promises, promises...). If the programmers improve on the first game just a tiny little bit, it'll still be utterly stunning.

TIP OFF (Anco)

Dino Dini's football sim *Kick Off 2* is almost certainly the most popular and successful sports game ever, so the news that he's turning his talents to the even faster-moving sport of basketball comes as a Godsend to all fans of lightning-fast and realistic sporting action. A speeding bullet won't have anything on this one.

BIRDS OF PREY (Electronic Arts)

Four years in the making, *Birds Of Prey* (nee *Hawk*) certainly OUGHT to be the be-all-and-end-all of flight simulations. Almost every plane currently in service in the world, from the A-10 Tankbuster to the Boeing 747, is simulated, and with a practically infinite range of missions you'll never get bored. See if it was worth the wait, any month now...

SMASH TV (Ocean)

The best arcade game of recent years (to these eyes anyway) comes to the Amiga near the end of the year, courtesy of programming legend ZZZKJ (the man behind *Super Hang-On*, *Super Monaco GP* and many more). If anyone can convert the awesome slaughterfest that was the coin-op onto 16-bit, it's our tip for the top this year.

CREATION (Electronic Arts)

Programming team Bullfrog have made quite a name for themselves writing God simulations, but this forthcoming release could be the ultimate. You actually control evolution itself in an attempt to create the ideal lifeform, by crossing different species in response to changing circumstances. (I should think crossing a giraffe with a Tyrannosaurus Rex should cover most eventualities.)

MAGIC POCKETS (Renegade)

Of course, the real strength of the console machines up until now has lain in the world of cutesy arcade platform games in the Mario tradition. The Bitmap Brothers (of *Xenon 2*, *Speedball 2* and *Gods* fame) are set to take them on their own ground with this game, which promises to take all of the best elements from previous games in the genre and weld them together into something really quite special.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (US Gold?)

It remains to be confirmed that USG has snapped up this license, but one way or another, this more than any other could be the game that shapes the Amiga's future. If it's converted from the amazing Megadrive original well, it could give the Amiga years of extra life as an arcade gamer's dream machine.

competing with the consoles on their own ground. Some believe that this will all mean an increase in the numbers of people owning both a console and a computer, but that's only going to happen if computers provide something the consoles don't.



• *F19*: Flight simulations and other 'serious' games will play an increasingly dominant role in Amiga development schedules.

THE FINAL SCORE

So where does that leave us? Well, if we're not careful, I see it leaving the Amiga as a declining minority interest, perhaps occupying a similar position to that of the 8-bit machines today. Dirt-cheap games will sell in big numbers to the existing user base, and specialist-appeal titles such as flight sims and Sierra-type adventures (which don't tend to interest the console buyer) will dominate the full-price listings.

The Amiga as a games machine will become more and more marginalised, and increasingly the domain of musicians and artists. As for the quality of the games, I don't really think there's that much room for improvement on what exists now, and more importantly not much incentive for producers to improve. The negligible

levels of console piracy will attract developers in large numbers (it's already started), and Amiga owners will have little option other than to buy what's on offer. In such a climate, the predominance is likely to be of tried-and-trusted formulas, and ever more sequels and 'updates'. (Of the last Amiga Power top 40, 13 out of 28 'original' - as opposed to re-released - games were sequels or follow-ups to previous hits.)

Mind you, stuff like *Switchblade II* proves that even if innovation is thin on the ground, we'll still be looking at some pretty spiffing software. Free from the burden of thinking too much, Amiga programmers will be able to really go to town on providing decent gameplay and proper presentation (for once), and maybe even games without disk swapping and huge accessing pauses! (Can you imagine console owners putting up with that? "Insert cartridge two..." I don't think.)

You've heard a great deal about how great the Amiga is, and most of that information is completely accurate. But it would be foolish indeed for games players and producers to expect this state of affairs to last forever. At present we're being treated to a healthy mix of wonderfully challenging and innovative games, and cheap fun affairs.

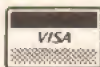
Over the next few years programmers and games designers will continue to experiment, and the result will be good for us. Our only fear is from the very same march of low-cost technology which brought us the Amiga in the first place.

The Amiga continues to head the 'cool bits of hardware to own' league, and the British love of computers which are more than games machines shows little sign of cooling. So let's look forward with cautious optimism. It could well be that we're very close to the zenith of the Amiga's triumphs. Make the most of the good times. ■

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WHEN WINNING

There are plenty of tips, cheats, hints and pokes for individual games doing the rounds, but what about a guide which can help you win any type of game? *Express* recruited four of Britain's best Amiga gamers, each a specialist in their favourite genre, and talked them into revealing their secrets...

SHOOT TO KILL



Bob Wade is editor of *Amiga Shopper*. Formerly editor, writer or reviewer for *Amiga Format*, *ACE* and

Amstrad Action. Says Bob: "I've been playing games professionally for six years, in fact I've been hooked on shoot-'em-ups for ten years."

When it comes to shoot-'em-ups I don't think there's any need for genre explanations. But these twelve tips should help you be victorious in your lethal lead spraying.

1. Learn patterns

Most vertically scrolling shoot-'em-ups, like *SWIV* for instance, have all enemies appearing in particular attack patterns.

So pay strict attention to what appears where and when. Next time you can be in position ready and waiting for the horrible little suckers.

2. Learn tactics

If they aren't in a pre-defined attack pattern then aliens will have pre-defined attack tactics which again, you must learn and exploit to the full. For example the pests in *Virus* home in on you, but sitting still and letting them buzz around you is the easiest way to blast them - remember aliens don't learn by their mistakes - yet.

3. Bottom bandits

Always beware the alien that sneaks up from behind. This applies to horizontal, vertical and 3D shoot-'em-ups. Sit at the back of the screen and you're just asking for a rear raid.

4. Dodging

Always be prepared to run away, run

away, run away quickly. This is not cowardice, just plain common sense, if you're at a disadvantage. Most attackers disappear after a while, so practice evasion techniques.



• *SWIV*: Watch those attack patterns

5. Smart bombs

Save these for dire emergencies when you only have a life or two left or are approaching a crucial restart point. They are a last resort not to be used at the first sign of trouble. In fact a good *Defender* player would frown on using them at all.

6. Bonuses

There is no such thing as a bonus worth dying for. They can be valuable, but the penalties incurred by dying are always large - if it's too risky forget it.

7. Check your weapons

Are you sure you're using the correct weapon for taking out that beastie? Could you do it faster with something else? Always experiment because you could make life much easier.

8. Mind the trees

Watch out for innocent bits of vegetation and building, they might just make you explode. There you are cruising over a spaceship in *Uridium* and KABOOM, head on into a small block. There's not an enemy in sight and don't you feel a silly prat?

9. Team work

There's no point being competitive in a shoot-'em-up. If you can team up with another player you can wipe those alien scum-suckers in half the time. Check out the ageing beastie *Plutos* for a classic case of 'you take the left side and I'll take the right'.

10. Move

Sit still and you're dead. This applies to 3D shoot-'em-ups where you have to keep

ARCADE ADVENTURES



Gary Penn is arguably Britain's most experienced games reviewer. He's worked on just about every computer mag

worth mentioning, and is now *Express*' games editor consultant editor of *Amiga Power*.

An adventure with arcade overtones? Or arcade action with adventure undertones? The arcade adventure label could quite easily be slapped on practically every form of entertainment software in the world.

It is however more often associated with any form of gameplay which requires running and jumping around, avoiding traps, occasionally shooting or fighting or picking up things and solving simple puzzles, which is usually a matter of placing the right

object in the right place at the right time. The platform-based *Flick Dangerous* series, *Gods* and *Chubby Gristle* are good examples in that particular department. The arcade adventure tag does tend to extend also to run 'n' jump romps which have fewer



• *Prince of Persia*: Know when to jump.

but less obvious puzzles to solve.

Rainbow Islands, *Chuck Rock* and *Prince Of Persia* are three representative titles which spring to mind. Here then are 10 fundamental facts which should ensure that innocent arcade adventurers' progress is made in leaps and bounds.

1. Get a grip

A joystick with healthy tactile feedback

and easily achieved diagonal movements is a must. Most run 'n' jump affairs involve an upward joystick movement to execute the crucial jumping aspect.

2. If at first you don't succeed...

... try and try again. No really. If you don't take the time to familiarise yourself with your new found environment during the first few plays, you may not live to regret it.

3. A man's gotta know his limitations

Before you begin the mission proper, get used to the behaviour of the character under your control, particularly if he, she or it has any peculiar properties.

4. Get a feel

Find out how far you can fall without dying, how far you can jump and how far you can 'hang' off a platform. Do all these early on to avoid mistakes at crucial stages of the game.

5. Make like an ape

By and large the adversaries in arcade

adventures move in not so mysterious ways. Study their behaviour and become a David Attenborough type bore. Being able to predict adversaries' movements is essential to success.

6. Look before you leap

It's as simple as that.

7. Maps the way to do it

Not all arcade adventures require a map, but some are so vast that one can prove essential. Even a simple set of boxes is better than nothing - at least you can make a note of what's what and where. And you can always send the map to your favourite magazine with a view to it being published.

8. Take it easy

Remember, fools rush in where wise men fear to tread. When playing an arcade adventure with push-scrolling or burst scrolling which is dictated by the player's position on screen, be careful not to run into trouble. You can occasionally use the scrolling to your advantage by keeping down the

IS EVERYTHING

on the move because the bad guys will home in on you and shoot at you – coo, what nasty aliens! Classic examples include my favourite *Elite* and *Encounter*.

11. Collision detection

Don't chance your arm too much because complaining that 'he never touched me' will not bring that life back – don't get cocky, give things a wide berth.



• *Xenon II: Watch your back.*

12. Guardians

If it flashes you've scored a palpable hit and should keep shooting that bit until it goes bang. If it doesn't flash try to shoot something else until it does. If nothing flashes then just shoot anything. If it still won't die you should either run away quickly, get a bigger and better weapon or phone the programmers to complain that their game is too hard.

quantity of adversaries on screen to a minimum. In some circumstances it's even possible to scroll adversaries out of harm's way.

9. Keep 'em peeled

Arcade adventure designers are invariably sadistic sons of mothers. They seem to think it's funny to put traps, such as spikes and pits and collapsing floors, all over the shop. So, when you enter a room or whatever for the first time, stop, look and listen before you make a move.



• *Rainbow Islands: Look out for traps.*

10. Keep an open mind

Don't ever be afraid to experiment; solutions, short cuts and handy tricks are usually there. It's just a matter of being bold enough to look.

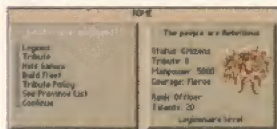
STUCK ON STRATEGY?

Trenton Webb is Amiga Format's games expert.

His working week (and leisure hours) are spent tackling any type of Amiga game, and the cards are usually stacked in his favour when it comes to strategy.



Strategy games owe less to computers and more to their table top simulations. The advantage of playing them on the computer is that it takes care of the rule checking, tabulation and calculation of hits. Whats more, the same event can be replayed continually, by using a saved game, which allows an analysis of strategy (both friend and foe) and offers greater freedom of experimentation.



• *Centurion: Test it to the limits.*

The only major difference between the two forms is that computer games are always designed to be played solo, with the Amiga providing your strategic foil. This means that initially the computer will have an edge, as it will have a full range of moves and tactics built in. But, if carefully observed it may prove more obvious and less canny than a human foe.

1. Read the manual

Obvious, but necessary. Don't just skim through the rules piecemeal, really read them. Only then will you be able to understand the concept, level and particular approach that the game takes to its subject.

2. Try to work out the true goals

You can't win if you do not know the specific victory conditions of each scenario, and at each level of the game. Go into the game understanding your minimum success conditions.

3. Get a grasp of game mechanics

Is it played in real time or are there turns? Are there limits within each turn? If there are turns how are they structured? Actions or decisions taken at

the beginning of your game turn may limit actions at the end, so plan a whole turn before touching anything.

4. Find out what's important

Work out which elements lay at the core of the game and which ones are just window dressing. Many games feature options which satisfy historical needs and not game requirements. If these exist find, and then ignore them.

5. Don't play to win straight away

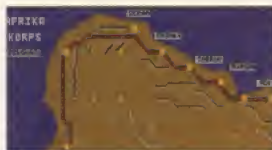
There's no point. You won't win so don't try. First follow any play through guides offered which serve as trainers and reveal the factors which the coders see as the key elements. And if they think something is important, then in game terms, it is.

6. Build up to the main game slowly

If there are different levels of difficulty, work through them. Each will either introduce new elements or stress existing ones further. This exercise reveals which particular elements of the game are crucial to victory. Concentrate on mastering these.

7. Be outrageous.

Each strategy game has limits which are only revealed when extreme strategies are tried. In a wargame try using only one type of troop, to find their strengths and weaknesses. So keep pushing the game till it breaks.



• *Africa Korps: Work out its strategy.*

8. Save, save and save again

Every time a new area of the game is reached, save. Mistakes are likely as you step into the unknown.

9. Work out how the computer opponent plays

Does it have an overall strategy or does it simply respond to your actions? If the computer employs a consistent strategy, work out where, why and how it will deviate from this plan in response to your actions. If the computer opponent is highly responsive, learn how to sucker it.

10. Be analytical and patient

Always make notes. Strategy games are not memory tests.

ANGLES ON ADVENTURES

Sean Masterson is a former adventure designer for The Games Workshop and is now dep ed of Commodore Format.



1. Play in a group

Party based role playing games in particular are very social games so try not to play them alone.

2. Be patient

Things are going to happen slowly to begin with. You can use this space to pace yourselves for when the going gets rough.

3. Learn your powers

Make sure that you know what everything on the screen does. Interfaces are designed to be as intuitive as possible so you should be able to practice.

4. Swot up on the game

Browse through the manual. The better the manual, the more like a reference book it will be.

5. Don't rely on documentation You'll get stuck from time to time. There are clue books and guides but to use one too much too soon can spoil the fun.

6. Save often

It's the sensible way to make progress.

7. Be adventurous.

Have fun looking for clues. If the game catches your imagination, there's a lot of pleasure to be had from looking for clues in them.

8. Be smarter than the game.

Get used to its little tricks.

9. Don't take any stick

Sooner or later you're going to want to beat the game once and for all and that invariably requires fighting. Get stuck in.

10. Get a co-pilot

Some games can be driven from simultaneous controls, in which case team up with a co-pilot. One of you can handle the weapons while the other navigates when the game heats up.

TOTALLY ADDICTED?

We've all been hooked by a seemingly innocent shoot-'em-up; we've all been trapped by some curious arcade puzzler. But what makes a game so difficult to put down? We asked the writers of Britain's most insidious and addictive Amiga games to explain their actions...

ANDREW BRAYBROOK

Team: Grafgold • Best work: *Rainbow Islands*

If only there were three lines of code which would guarantee that a game be addictive. But there isn't...

I find that I can't really be sure that a game's going to work until it is completely finished, then I can judge.

The best trick is to remove obstacles which stop a game being addictive, rather than adding ingredients to make it addictive. If something in the control mode is too frustrating it will ruin the game. There is a very thin line between frustrating and addictive.

With *Rainbow Islands* it was all in the design and planning. It took Taito two years to plan the game and lay it out before they started programming. We were determined to keep the game true to the original coin-op. The best thing is that you have so much freedom in *Rainbow*. You can take it quickly or carefully, and the

control is so flexible. You can do so many things with those rainbows without any trouble. You have to use common sense rather than throwing a massive IQ at the problems, which is fun.

At the moment I'm playing *Lemmings* a great deal. When I first saw the game it really didn't grab me. I saw all these little creatures moving around and thought: 'Who cares?'. But once you learn the controls they become almost automatic. Once you've solved a problem you never have to struggle with it again. That makes a good game. People want to move on, it's that urge to progress.



ERIC MATTHEWS

Team: Bitmap Brothers • Best work: *Xenon II*

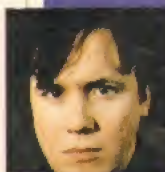
With *Gods* we took a standard format for a platform game and added plenty of surprises. It's important that there are graphical changes and different characters, although it's not so much a case of cramming lots of interesting things in, as carefully planning when to introduce weapons, new characters or monsters.

At the beginning of *Xenon II* players get to see some of the weapons on offer. They say, 'I want to get my hands on that' and it gives them a target. The first sequence is a good place to let players get used to the controls, and to give them an idea of what to expect.

The hardest part is difficulty level. I think we made the original *Xenon* too hard. When you're involved in the development of a game for a long time you forget how good you've become at playing it.

It's important to step back and let someone you trust have a play. Then you can get the measure of how hard the game really is.

It's also silly when a game sticks you back at the beginning of a level when you've nearly arrived at the end. That's just infuriating. I think a lot of people also find it annoying when they get killed and lose all the weapons they've built up. If you can't survive with an arsenal of weapons, how are you going to manage with hardly any at all? It doesn't make sense.



DAVID JONES

Team: DMA Design • Best work: *Lemmings*

Lemmings is so good because there's so much freedom to play. You can go where you want and do what you want, that's the way we always planned the game.

At every level you know what you have to do, but actually achieving those goals is a different

matter. It's up to the player, and he knows that if he fails there's no-one to blame but himself.

When we're writing a game we have to be sure that little things like collision detection are absolutely spot on. There's nothing worse than being killed for no good reason. People lose trust in a game and give up.

We like to keep each level short so there's no loss of interest. You also have to provide a nice linear playability curve so that the game is easy to begin with, but becomes progressively more challenging.

I find games like Electronic Arts' *F18 Interceptor* very addictive, because they provide you with missions. That way you can go out and try and complete a task,

PETER MOLYNEUX

Team: Bullfrog • Best work: *Populous*

There are a number of golden rules which should not be ignored. You'll find them used in all the famously addictive games starting with *Space Invaders*.



One is time pressure, whether it be a clock counting down, or the monsters in *Invaders* coming faster down the screen. It keeps people interested and on their toes.

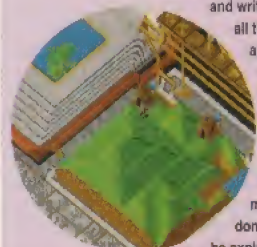
Two should be the 'oh, what comes next?' factor. The best for this are role playing games like *Dungeon Master*. You keep playing because you always want to know what's coming next. What's the next dungeon going to look like? What's on the next level? It's that mystery which keeps you going.

Three is linked to that, it's character improvement. A good shoot-'em-up will feature this by providing an advancing player with more weapons or extra power.

Four is logic. Anything you come up against must have an element of logic. It's no good if level one of a game is easy and then level two is almost impossible. Everything must be easy to understand and not confusing.

Five is fairness. Players have to feel that they are being offered a fair deal. They don't want to feel that the game is against them as well as the enemy characters.

All the best games feature these elements, but there is more. You can't sit down and write a game with all those features, and then expect it to be immediately addictive. There is an extra quality which is so mysterious that I don't think it can be explained.



rather than getting involved in a very long and tiresome game.

Playability is the all important factor whether you're talking about *Manic Miner*, *Lemmings* or flight simulators.



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BUGGY BOY

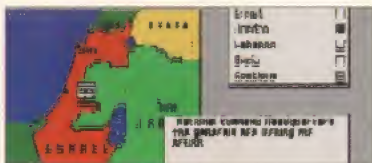
Encore • £9.99



Bumbling along simple driving courses in a non too speedy beach buggy may sound like the ingredients of a dull and dreary game. Fortunately, *Buggy Boy* is anything but. In your quest to avoid rocks and brush, you have to pick up cute little flags and run into bouncy red balls. The aim is to improve your speed and flag rating, and you're likely to spend hours doing just that. Best fun when trying to beat your pals' fastest times.

CONFLICT

16-Blitz • £4.99



Political and military strategy games are poorly represented at the bottom end of the price scale, so it came as something of a surprise when 16-Blitz unleashed this delightful little puzzler.

You are the top man in Israel sometime in the near future, and it's your job to hoodwink and bully your massively unfriendly Arab neighbours until you've reached a position of unassailable power in the Middle East. Also, an easy to use menu driven environment makes *Conflict* a joy to play. OK, so it's not a patch on more grandiose (and expensive) power thrillers but for that price it acts as a more than acceptable alternative.

FANTASY WORLD DIZZY

Code Masters • £7.99



Sillyness and off the wall fun is the theme for most Code Masters games, and *Fantasy World Dizzy* is no exception. You might think that this is an odd choice among such celebrities as *Op Wolf*, *Interceptor* and *Carrier Command*, but those boys at the Coders are forever churning out charming cartoon adventures guaranteed to keep youngsters happy. Look out for other titles including *Fast Food* and *Little Puff*.

FOOTBALL MANAGER

Pocket Power • £2.99



So, you reckon football management games are stupid, pointless and dull? Well, you're probably right, and you'll find it hard to find a game quite as bad as this. Even so, it's just one of a score of cheap football games which loiter around the games charts every week.

It's also made its way into a million and one software collections, and boasts ridiculously dedicated followers around the country. *Football Manager* is heading up a new range of 16-bit budget games priced at a tempting £2.99, and you would be well advised to seek out a Pocket Power rack at your local newsagent, garage or even software dealer.

OPERATION WOLF

The Hit Squad • £7.99



At times relentlessly violent, and at other times even more relentlessly violent. It's an amphetamine death-rush through hundreds of nasty guerillas, and you're armed with nothing more than a few tons of extremely unpleasant hardware. A former Christmas number one, and with good reason. Anybody with a penchant for action will not be disappointed. It's a blood-fest of unprecedented nastiness. What could be better?

INTERCEPTOR

Classic Collection • £10.99



Electronic Arts' fulsome flight simulator tips over the £10 mark, but it's worth digging out that extra coinage. For a game that's nearly as old as the Amiga itself, *Interceptor* is admirably well crafted. Your jet fighter is easy to handle, and there are plenty of scraps to keep your furrowed brow sweating.

Landscapes are pretty if slightly less than detailed, and out of cockpit views are a treat. There's no need to fear a barrage of baffling information, this flight sim lets you get into the air quickly and without fuss.

CARRIER COMMAND

Mirror Image • £9.99

Rated by many as one of the best games ever for the Amiga, *Carrier* is a realtime simulation of life aboard an active assault fighter ship. Superlative programming and a grand feeling of "being there" make it one of those games you really should have in your collection. There are plenty of weapons for your amusement including amphibious tanks and high speed aircraft, all of which can be customised to your particular requirements. Plus you can get in some spying during those quiet moments.



Arguably the best game you can buy at that price.

Incidentally, *Mirror Image* is a budget label worth watching. Other titles include *Xenon II*, *3D Pool*, *Strike Force Harrier* and *Defender of the Crown*.

COLLECTING COMPILATIONS

Don't forget to look out for games compilations. These usually cost about £12 to £15, and feature between four and six games. However, some can be a false economy. Publishers often bundle games of a similar nature together (a driving, James Bond or flight sim collection for example) which can become a little tiresome. Also, compilations which feature a few big names often hide the fact that there's at least one terrible game lurking in the box. The only other downside is that each game does not come with its own packaging and documentation can be scant.

Continued on page 16 ►

DOUBLE DRAGON

16-Blitz Plus • £9.99



It's just one of a babble of beat-'em-ups you can choose from including such classics as *International Karate Plus*, *Last Ninja II* (Hit Squad) and *Barbarian II* (Kixx). You know the score; find your ugly opponents, give them a sound beating, and save the girl of your dreams. Such is the game's impact that Hollywood is planning to use it as the basis of an action movie...

ROCKET RANGER

Mirror Image • £9.99



Even at full price this was considered to be a game worthy of anyone's shopping list. At under a tenner it's almost an imperative purchase.

Rocket Ranger is one of those 'interactive movie' games which move swiftly from one effervescently illustrated scene to another. The plot rests on an American (you) stopping the Nazis dropping a mega-bomb on the White House. There are plenty of mini-adventures to complete and, while none are especially challenging, they all hold enough intrigue to keep you bashing those bloody Germans.

THUNDER BLADE

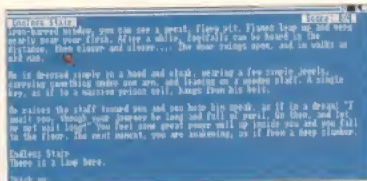
Kixx • £7.99



Hold on to your stomach, unscramble your brains, and get ready to steer an extraordinarily large helicopter through swarms of hi-tech hardware. Kixx's coin-op conversion takes you through multifarious levels of hardball aerial warfare. Other big names in the Kixx collection include *Gauntlet II*, *Dniler*, *Out Run*, *California Games* and *Blasters*.

ZORK III

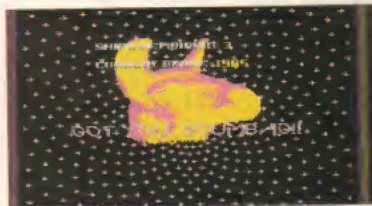
Mastertronic • £9.99



Anyone who likes nothing better than sneaking around dark and dingy dungeons with a bunch of weirdos, monsters and creeps will have heard of Infocom. *Zork III* is one of many underworld adventures which have recently been making a re-appearance in the cheap zone, courtesy of Mastertronic. Those young pups of adventurers used to graphical interfaces and pretty pictures will be disappointed. This is a text only yarn featuring plenty of options but nothing else. Even so, now you've booted up, you'll find it nigh impossible to reach for the eject button.

SUPER GRIDRUNNER

Action Sixteen • £7.99



A real blast from the past for pre-Amiga gaming veterans. Llamasoft's alien wasting exercise brings back happy memories of hundreds of C64 shoot-'em-ups. It hardly suffers from an overload of features or tricks, but for fun and excitement it's a corker from start to finish. Prepare to terminate the attacking Slimelord hordes from the planet Xtharrg...

HONG KONG PHOOEY

Hi-Tec • £6.99



Hi-Tec has scooped a wacky line up of Hanna Barbera cartoons and, for the most part, succeeded in translating them to home computer formats. *Hong Kong Phooey* is the best of the bunch with bright and cheerful graphics, pleasant enough gameplay, and those little touches which made the Number One Super Guy such a laugh in the first place.

Both Hi-Tec and Alternative Software have landed nice little earners by converting well known characters into low-cost games. Others include *Postman Pat*, *Atom Ant*, *Wile E Coyote* and *Bugs Bunny*.

AMIGA PD GAMES PACK A FIERCE PUNCH

The PD scene has produced some really excellent Amiga games over the years, writes Frank O'Connor.

The main advantage of PD software is that it is completely free (although the PD companies invariably charge for discs and postage). The quality of PD games varies wildly, from the undeniably atrocious, to really professional pieces of entertainment software.



• *Invaders*: Don't forget the classics.

Some of the games that have emerged have been very impressive indeed. Almost without exception they have been rip-offs of arcade machines. Very few original ideas appear on the PD circuit, but some of these have been pulled off with enough style and wit to merit another mention.



• *Welltris*: High playability rating

The list includes classics like *Ballonacy*, a bizarre variation on the bomber theme wherein you fly a balloon and bomb skyscrapers. It's simple and fun. Fans of the arcade machine *Arkanoid* have dozens of ball-batting copies to choose from. One of the best of these is *Arcaoid*, a fairly accurate and polished copy.



• *Xsyss*: Surreal fun.

Amoeba Invaders is a brilliant shoot-'em-up which has only recently appeared on the scene. It has excellent graphics and sound and is outrageously addictive. Also very addictive and slightly simpler, is *Drip*, a maze puzzle game where you have to colour a meanie infested pipeline. Great fun!



• *Tiles*: Infuriating puzzle

Welltris is a clone of the Tetris sequel *Welltris*. It maintains all the playability of the original game. Strategy fans who want to use their brains could try *Tiles*, a version of the classic boardgame *Shanghai*.

You can't go wrong with PD games, simply because they cost nothing more than the price of stamp and a disk. Also, the list of titles is endless. Just try any of the big PD companies (most advertise in *Express* regularly) and ask for a catalogue, you'll be glad you did.

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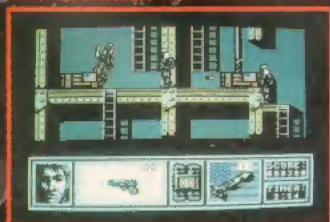
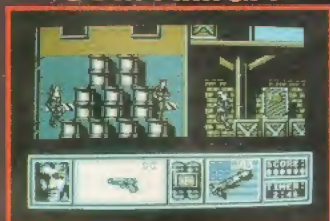
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WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH!

Games software has a short history made ever more lively by the follies and incompetence of its producers. *Express* picks through the dustbin of the past ten years, and makes some very unpleasant discoveries...

HOW LOW CAN YOU GO?



• *Vixen*: A cheap game needs cheap publicity

When it comes to achieving notoriety, the best policy is to be unflinchingly offensive. The more stupidly insensitive the game, the better its chances of entering the hallowed Hall of Infamy.

Take a certain Japanese company which figured that young games players are just the sort of chaps who go for games about chasing women. Unfortunately, the software authors went just a jot too far when they produced a little item entitled...*Rape*.

The idea was indeed to chase women, but some may say that bearing down on innocent teenagers in a Tokyo car-park is hardly in the spirit of conscientious game plots. Points were scored for acts of illegality, immorality and, of course, violence.

Naturally, *Rape* was an enormous hit, even after Japanese women's rights groups took to the streets in voluminous protest, prompting some bad publicity.

Here, the only game to really whip up protest was *Raid Over Moscow*, wherein 'your job' was to drop a few megatons of high explosives over that noble city. After a confrontation with banner-wielding peace people, publisher US Gold decided that maybe it was a bit over the top. The name was changed to *Raid Over Berlin*, and the time frame was re-adjusted to 1945.

But it's sex rather than violence which raises the highest emotions. A certain Mr Paul Burgess's blood was boiling when Heathrow customs officials seized a shipment of games he was importing from the US to Britain. "It's a brutal, fascist regime stopping simple software coming in," he wailed. The "simple software" was called, simply, *Sex Vixens From Space*.

'Psycho Pigs UXB was such a bad game that an ad campaign of admirably poor taste was deemed necessary'

The British fetish for schoolboy sexism doesn't stop there. Companies have been criticised for running salacious ad campaigns, and they haven't often repented. Martech's *Vixen*, for example, was promoted with the help of an outrageous picture of what can best be described as a scantily clad curvaceous lovely. It prompted murmurs of protest here, but to Germans, the word *Vixen*, chimes remarkably well with their word for "fuck". When German buyers were presented with the packaging there was an absolute storm. The name was changed to save the blushes of games buyers.

US Gold's *Psycho Pig UXB* was such a bad game, that an ad campaign of admirably poor taste was deemed necessary. It concentrated itself on two young lads comparing software (favourably) with another curvaceous lovely. The Advertising Standards Authority was somewhat less than amused.

More recently, French firm Ubisoft's use of cheap sexual imagery was paraded by the ever watchful ASA. Ads for *Ranx*, featuring a man and woman in unmistakable embrace. The catch-line "Your mother wouldn't like it" was evidently accurate.

Code Masters' *Rock Star Ate My Hamster* was booted out of leading retail stores for a short time, after it was discovered that an included booklet featured jokes about "glue sniffing and screwing". This, it was agreed, was not the sort of material which stores could justifiably present to their pre-teen customers.

Skweek, a cutesy affair from US Gold, was pulled for a short time after seething mothers made it apparent that some wit of a programmer had bolted a bug onto the game prompting the furry star to start shouting shocking four letter expletives at the faintest opportunity.

Mirrorsoft never had any intention of shipping obnoxious software, especially after his supreme mightiness Robert Maxwell got wind from Amnesty International (no less) that the otherwise impressive *Killing Cloud* featured torture sequences. Maxwell boomed out orders, and the sequences were dropped.

Spare a thought for a small company called Shareware 1990s. Last year it released a perfectly innocent game called *Bad-Bad*. The seriously low-budget maze game was centred around a 16-year-old girl, and her attempts to abscond with her sweetheart. Hacks from the *News of the World* were dutifully informed of this outrage and came up with the memorable headline, "We Expose Computer Kiddy Porn". Remember, to court controversy you don't have to be controversial.

Continued on page 20 ►

VIDEO NAZIS



• *Silent Service*: Unreasonable Nazi link

In Germany, the best way to be offensive is to start glorifying Nazism. Government and media are, not surprisingly, super sensitive when it comes to swastikas, jackboots and the like.

Although that country has suffered from the presence of a few pieces of software too nasty to describe, it was perhaps a little unfair to ban MicroProse's *Silent Service*, on the grounds that it promoted warfare.

German censors, infuriated by pro-Nazi Public Domain games were extra keen to catch out commercial programs. Prose's excellent game did feature insignia from the last war, but the company contested the ban, and eventually won the case.

Now official censors are working on stamping out neo-Nazi sponsored games based around grim Holocaust atrocities.



• *Rock Star Ate My Hamster*: Good game, offensive manual.

ENTER FIRST INTO BATTLE... LAST TO LEAVE

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Set in the near future, as an alternative reality, BATTLE COMMAND is an arcade strategy game in which the player controls a single "MAULER" Assault Tank in one of 16 scenarios (missions) in the ultra war, fought between two dominant races in the NEW WORLD. The latest phase of the North/South war has been going on for over 10 years, with a stalemate eventually developing - a standoff between armies massed over a long dug-in battlefield. Such are the defensive capabilities of each side, full scale attacks are suicidal, so any offensive moves are, by necessity, small "behind the lines" actions performed by elite troops in specially designed vehicles. The Mauler is the latest such machine - capable of being lifted in and out of hostile territory by fast stealth choppers and armed with the most advanced weaponry the Northern scientists can devise.

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TRULY AWFUL GAMES

Publishing a rubbish game is not as simple as it sounds. Any knucklehead can write a game, but getting it into the shops is an art.

It is generally agreed that US Gold's *World Cup Carnival* is the worst game ever. This accolade would never have been achieved were it not for a brilliant flash of genius. It was during the glorious World Cup of 1986 that Gold decided a World Cup game would be a good way of exploiting prevailing market demands. Gold promptly fell on a (poor) two-year-old game, hacked a couple of sequences at either end of the program, and slapped two quid extra on the price.

Amiga owners will be familiar with Gremlin's *Federation of Free Traders* (FOFT). Not only was this game desperate, dismal and dull, it was also supplied with a totally inadequate manual, looked just a mile too much like the classic *Elite*, and it was riddled with bugs. These days, the folk at Gremlin rarely find cause to talk about FOFT.



• FOFT: Fell lamentably short of expectations

Those golden boys at Ocean have also managed a few howlers, the most remarkable of which must be *Eco*. Billed as an evolution simulation, it offered the intriguing opportunity of nurturing primitive life forms towards some semblance of animal life. Gamers thought they were too thick to understand the game when it was launched, they just couldn't get anything to happen. For many it was too late when they realised that starting the game and finishing it were just about the same thing.

When Dirty Den was all the rage Macsen, a strange little outfit from Wales, produced an *Eastenders* game. Is being Lofty your kind of fun? Well, it wasn't anyone else's either (not even Tom Watts, and he was paid to do it). The game was a disaster, as was Argus's soap opera farce of the same year, *Grange Hill*. We await *Neighbours* with rapturous enthusiasm.



• Eastenders on computer just didn't work

Other excruciating games include Domark's *Friday the 13th* (programmed by teachers), Argus's *Max Headroom* (which had nothing to do with the actual character) and a compilation from Rainbird called *Don't Buy This* - it featured a selection of the day's most appalling games, all of which would otherwise have been doomed to obscurity.

THEY NEVER MADE IT...

Mirrorsoft is a company which takes itself very seriously. So when certain magazines (er...us) started reporting that its excellent *Dungeon Master* would not be coming out on the Amiga 500 (it was already available for 1Mb machines), Mirrorsoft's boys became quite agitated.



• Scooby Doo: Elite wasted pounds and hours.

UK boss Peter Bilotta had this to say: "We're in daily contact with the game's producers and we know that an Amiga 500 version is almost there in terms of quality. We hope to have it out on sale by the second quarter." That was in the first quarter of 1989.

Despite a gruelling production schedule *Dungeon Master* never made it. Programmers FTL just couldn't squeeze the game down.

Likewise, Telecomsoft was happily hyping an adventure epic called *Lasers and Labyrinths*, until the programming team responsible for the project "ceased trading". It seems that the programmers just couldn't be bothered to see the project through. Their agent at the time commented: "They just said they couldn't finish it. They took it so casually, kind of like cancelling a dinner engagement." Telecomsoft waved goodbye to wads of cash, and the company no longer exists.

Other unfortunate money wasters include Activision, which dropped a five-figure sum on an effort called *Lock-On*. The coin-op conversion was so dreadful that Activision abandoned the idea.

And Elite was burning the midnight oil in an attempt to stun the world with a cinematic game based on telly dog *Scooby Doo*. After two years the company admitted defeat. Now Hi-Tec has launched a respectable version, which is definitely worth a look.

Rainbird wasted up to £100,000 on its mega-project *Reach for the Moon* before realising that it wasn't coming together. Gamers had been reading about this amazing project for months, before they were told that it would never be.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER?

Star Trek was to be the greatest game of the 1980s. Publisher Telecomsoft was promising a triumph in interactive entertainment. Unfortunately, things did not go to plan. Telecom announce its licence coup in 1986, and at that autumn's PCW Show in London, an impressive and costly stand was erected in the fashion of the Starship Enterprise's bridge.



• Elvira: Took so long she sank Tynesoft

Due to the fussiness of the licensor in the US, Telecom's programmers had to send over every single graphic, which the licensor would often insist be modified. The game finally crept out in 1988, on the ST only.

For lateness *Star Trek* can hardly be surpassed, but *Elvira* took Tynesoft a year to produce, before it went bust and the project was given to Accolade. ■

REACH FOR YOUR LAWYERS

There are many approaches to sending a man sprawling over his treasure chest with wide-eyed fear, but the best is to rip off his work.

Take the saga of *R-Type* and *Katakis*. Just as Activision was preparing a coin-op conversion of sideways scrolling shoot-'em-up *R-Type*, US Gold announced a completely separate game called *Katakis*. Trouble was, few could tell any major differences between the two games.

Activision duly insisted that the game's name be changed (eventually to *Denaris*), that the game be altered and that the launch-date be set-back a few months. Cheeky Activision then hired the team responsible for *Katakis* (Rainbow Arts) to write the Amiga version of *R-Type*. Both titles were extremely successful and everyone went away happy.

Not so with Martech's *Phantom Fighter*. The firm sent out an incomplete demo to various magazines, which was then reviewed as a full game by *Commodore*

User. Martech probably wouldn't have minded, but *CU* slugged the game out of sight. A legal rumpus then ensued which rumbled on until Martech finally went bust.

Poor US Gold was ever-so miffed after announcing that it would be publishing *Universal Simulator II*. Unfortunately, the programming team, Intergalactic, had a change of heart at the last moment, and MicroProse



• UMS II: battle over battle game

ended up with the scoop. US Gold's Tim Chaney complained bitterly that a "gentleman's agreement" had been smashed.

A mini-war broke out between Grand Slam and Vivid Images after both claimed to have secured the licence to produce *Liverpool FC* games. It turned out that one had secured the rights to the club licence, and the other had won the team licence. Oh dear.

Domark's attempts to produce a game based on classic TV bingo quiz show *Bob's Full House* ran aground after Mr Monkhouse's agents decided that their man should not be featured. Domark had paid for the rights to the TV show, but had not been granted the rights to the man. Unlucky for some, as they say.

The best way to start a real rumpus is to hit a country right in the middle of its financial institutions. Lazy buffoons in the Stock Exchange were totally engrossed in *Leisure Suit Larry*, until a hideous virus emerged to trash loads of systems.

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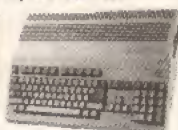
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Silica's address is 1-4 The Mews, Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent DA14 4DX.

♦ The winner of the Samsung 286 PC offered in our PC Supplement of May is Mr P. G. Curtis of Newton Abbot, Devon. Congratulations.

1. Which of these is NOT a game?

- A) Rainbow Islands
- B) Rainbow Warrior
- C) Rainbow Alliance

2. Which of these is NOT a game character

- A) Skweek
- B) Lemmy
- C) Mario

3) Which of these is NOT a games software house?

- A) Heinz
- B) US Gold
- C) Ocean

Send to: Express Silica Games Competition,
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My answers to the questions are:
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- C) Completely Grainy Array

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No ugly wart-nose is gonna make a monkey out of me! But that's just what that witch has done - one minute I'm the mighty Toki and the next I'm having breakfast delousing my armpits, I can't walk a step without tripping over my knuckles and, oh, there's an overhanging vine - time to swing out sister! But my broken heart is going ape. My beloved Miho (I can't wait to share a banana with her) has been kidnapped and somehow I've got to regain my manhood - until then I'm just swingin' in the rain!

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ocean

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